

Lithuania backs off border guard plan

VILNIUS, U.S.S.R. (AP) — Lithuania's government backed down Wednesday on one of its hottest points of conflict with the Kremlin, a plan to establish its own border guard, saying it wanted to avoid clashes with Soviet troops.

It also told citizens not to resist if Soviet officials try to seize their weapons.

Red Army troops refrained from occupying Lithuanian buildings or rounding up more Lithuanian military deserters, a day after the first violent confrontations in the standoff with the republic.

However, the Soviet military stepped up a war of words against

Lithuania, complaining of increased attacks on soldiers and accusing it of a campaign to discredit the Soviet army.

President Vytautas Landsbergis of Lithuania said his government suspended its plans for the border guard for fear of sparking clashes with Soviet troops.

"At present, establishing border points would be stepping up confrontation," Landsbergis told a news conference in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius.

Lithuanian officials said they had pushed for the border guards in hopes of winning formal recognition

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from foreign governments of their March 11 declaration of independence.

Landsbergis said even discussion of the subject had provoked conflicts with Moscow, and he said there had been reports of Soviet troops trying to control the roads between Lithuania and Latvia, the neighboring republic.

Gorbachev ordered the sign-up for the border guard halted as soon as it began. In the same decree last week, he ordered Lithuanians to turn in their weapons and said those not surrendered by Wednesday would be confiscated.

Landsbergis said he advised Lithuanians not to resist if Soviet authorities came to seize their hunting guns. At the same time, he said citizens should treat the officials as uninvited guests.

This is in keeping with the Lithuanian strategy of refusing to obey "foreign" Soviet law while avoiding violent conflicts.

Only about 1,000 of the 30,000 guns registered in Lithuania have been turned in to local police, said a Lithuanian Interior Ministry official, Yaroslav Prokopovich. He said local police were refusing to hand them over to the Soviet Army as Gorbachev ordered.

In Moscow, the commander of Soviet paratroopers alleged there had been an increase in attacks on soldiers since the independence declaration.

The state-run news agency Tass said Col. Gen. Vladislav Achalov reported "a noticeable increase in incidents of provocation against soldiers and armed attacks by groups of young hooligans against both individual soldiers and military sites."

He listed three recent attacks in Kaunas, Lithuania's second-biggest

city. Two of the cases involved "hooligans" throwing stones at military guards, he said.

Vilnius was calm Wednesday. In a continuing show of force, Soviet paratroopers guarded the republic's Communist Party headquarters, which they seized Tuesday, but removed their riot gear and no longer carried automatic rifles.

The military presence did little to intimidate Lithuanians. Some took their children to the party headquarters to show them the soldiers lounging inside.

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